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A CHILD'S DAY

A Book of Rhymes

WALTER DE LA MARE

State Teachers College
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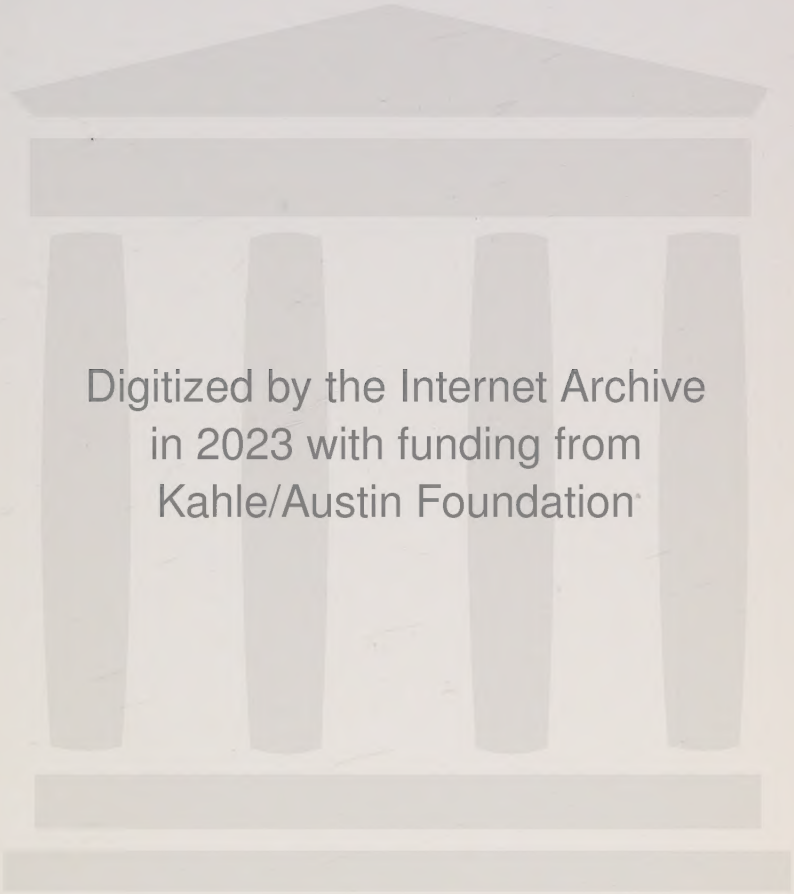

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A CHILD'S DAY

A Book of Rhymes

by WALTER DE LA MARE

With illustrations by

WINIFRED BROMHALL

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HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

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A CHILD'S DAY

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A CHILD'S DAY

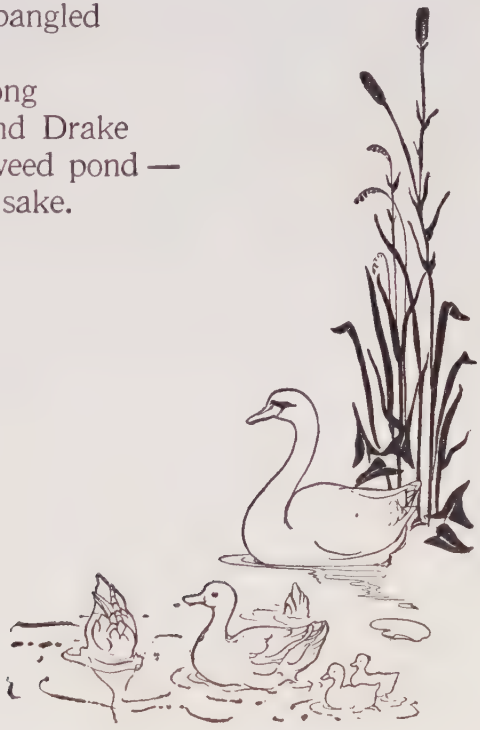
I sang a song to Rosamond Rose
Only the wind in the twilight knows:
I sang a song to Jeanetta Jennie,
She flung from her window a silver penny:
I sang a song to Matilda May,
She took to her heels and ran away:
I sang a song to Susannah Sue,
She giggled the whole of the verses through:

But nevertheless, as sweet as I can,
I'll sing a song to Elizabeth Ann —
The same little Ann as there you see
Smiling as happy as happy can be.
And all that my song is meant to say
Is just what she did one long, long day,
With her own little self to play with only,
Yet never once felt the least bit lonely.

Softly, drowsily,
Out of sleep;
Into the world again
Ann's eyes peep;
Over the pictures
Across the walls
One little quivering
Sunbeam falls.
A thrush in the garden
Seems to say,
Wake, little Ann,
'Tis day, 'tis day!
Faint sweet breezes
The casement stir,
Breathing of pinks
And lavender.
At last from her pillow,
With cheeks bright red,
Up comes her round little
Tousled head;
And out she tumbles
From her warm bed.

Little birds bathe
In the sunny dust.
Whether they want to,
Or not, they *must.*
Seal and Walrus
And Polar Bear
One green icy
Wash-tub share.
Alligator,
Nor Hippopot-
Amus ever
His bath forgot.
Out of his forest
The Elephant tramps

To squirt himself
In his gloomy swamps.
On crackling fins
From the deep sea fly
Flying-fish into
The air to dry.
Silver Swans
In shallows green
Their dew-bespangled
Pinions preen.
And all day long
Wash Duck and Drake
In their duckweed pond —
For washing's sake.



So, in her lonesome,
Slippety, bare,
Elizabeth Ann's
Splash — splashing there;
And now from the watery
Waves amonje
Stands slooshing herself
With that 'normous sponge.

Puma, Panther, Leopard, and Lion
Nothing but green grass have to dry on,
Seals and Walruses in a trice
Flick their water-drops into Ice;

Back to his forests the Elephant swings
Caked in mud against bites and stings;
As for the plump Hippopotamus,
He steams himself dry to save a fuss;
And the bird that cries to her mate Quack, Quack!
Is oily by nature if not by knack,
So the water pearls off *her* beautiful back.

But sailing the world's wide ocean round,
In a big broad bale from Turkey bound,
All for the sake of Elizabeth Ann
This towel's been sent by a Mussulman,
And with might and main she must rub — rub —
rub —
Till she's warm and dry from her morning tub.

Now twelve above,
And twice six beneath,
She must polish and polish
Her small, sharp teeth.

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The picture, you see,
Entirely fails
To show how nicely
She's nipped her nails.
But it's perfectly clear
With what patient care
She has drawn back neatly
Her smooth brown hair.
All *tiresome* things,
I'm bound to say,
For beasts just scratch
Their claws away.
And never from Egypt
Up to Rome
Walked monkey using
An ivory comb.
But there, Ann dear,
You'd rather be
A slim-tailed mermaid
In the sea:
And she has only
One small care —
To sleek and sleek and sleek
Her hair.

Here all we see
Is Ann's small nose,
A smile, two legs,
And ten pink toes,
Neatly arranged
In two short rows.

The Queen of Arabia, Uanjinee,
Slaves to dress her had thirty-three;
Eleven in scarlet, eleven in rose,
Eleven in orange, as every one knows;
And never was lady lovelier than she —
The Queen of Arabia, Uanjinee.

Yet — though, of course, 'twould be vain to tell a-
Nother word about Cinderella —
Except for a Mouse on the chimney shelf,
She put on her slippers quite — quite by herself,
And I can't help thinking the greater pleasure
Is to dress in haste, and look lovely at leisure.
Certainly summer or winter, Ann
Always dresses as quick as she can.

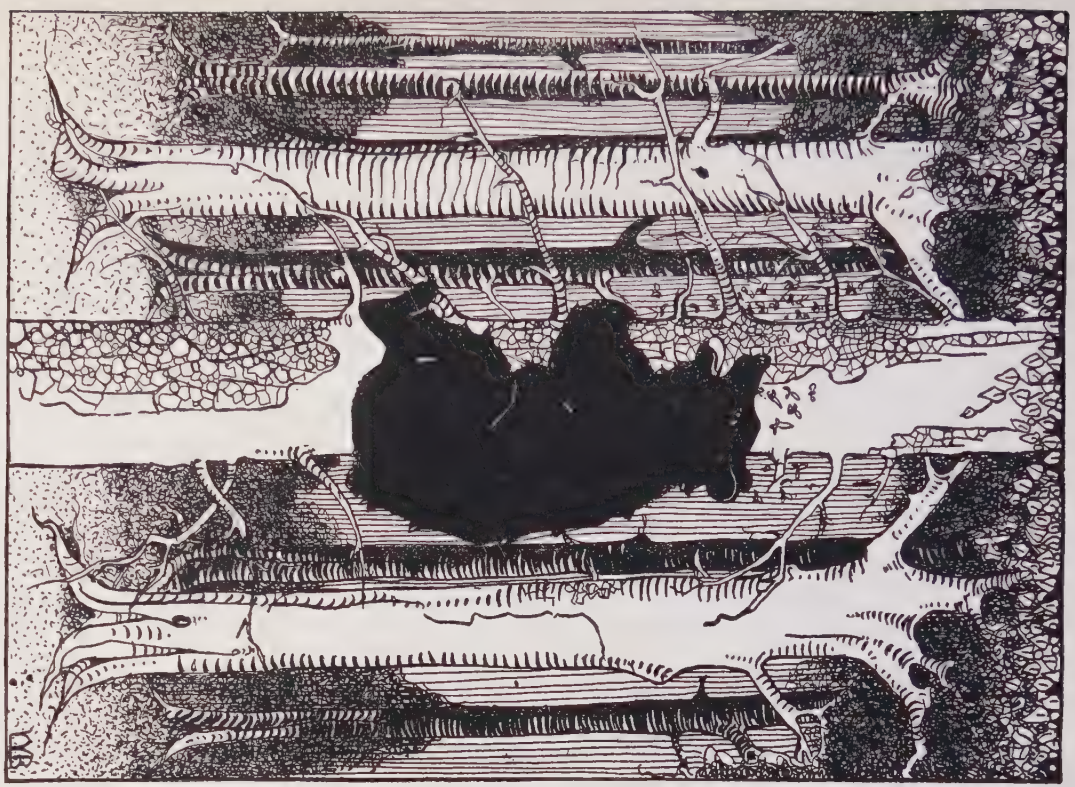
And there she is (on the other side),
The last button buttoned, the last tape tied.
Her silky hair has perched upon it
A flat little two-stringed linen bonnet.
Each plump brown leg that comes out of her frock
Hides its foot in a shoe and a sock.

But what we wear — O dearie me! —
Is naught but a patch upon what we *be*.
And rags and tatters often hide
A brave little body bunched up inside.
And one thing's certain; nobody knows
The Good from the Wicked by just their Clothes.

England over,
And all June through,
Daybreak's peeping
At half-past two.
Roses and dewdrops
Begin to be
Wonderful lovely
At half-past three.
Gulls and cormorants
On the shore
Squabble for fishes
At half-past four.
The great Queen Bee
In her golden hive
Is sleek with nectar
By half-past five.

The ravening birds
In the farmer's ricks
Are hungry for luncheon
At half-past six.
While all the pigs
From York to Devon
Have finished their wash
Before half-past seven.
But Elizabeth Ann
Gets up so late
She has only begun
At half-past eight
To gobble her porridge
up —
Hungry soul —
Tucked up in a bib,
Before her bowl.

Thousands of years ago,
In good King George's isles,
Forest — to forest — to forest spread,
For miles and miles and miles.
All kinds of beasts roamed there,
Drank of Teviot and Thames,
Beasts of all shapes and sizes and colors,
But without any names.
And snug and shag in his coat,
With green little eyes aglare,
Trod on his paws, with tapping of claws,
The beast men now call Bear;
Lurched on his legs and stole
Out of the rifts in the trees
All the sweet oozy summer-sun comb
Of the poor little bees;
Sat in the glades and caught
Flies by the hour,
Munched 'em up, just like a dog,
Sweet with the sour.



But Time, she nods her head —
  Like flights of the butterfly,
Mammoths fade through her hours;
  And Man draws nigh.
And it's ages and ages ago;
  Felled are the forests, in ruin;
Gone are the thickets where lived on his lone
    Old Bruin.

When safe into the fields Ann got,
She chose a dappled, shady spot,
Beside a green, rush-bordered pool,
Where, over water still and cool,
The little twittering birds did pass,
Like shadows in a looking glass.
Ann slily looked this way, and that;
And then took off her shady hat.
She peeped — and peeped; off came her frock,
Followed in haste by shoe and sock.
Then softly, slowly, down she went
To where the scented rushes bent,
And all among the fishes put
Like a great giant, her little foot,
And paddled slowly to and fro
Each little tiny thirsty toe.
Then dabbling in the weeds she drew
Her fingers the still water through,
Trying in vain with groping hand
To coax a stickleback to land;
But when she had nearly housed him in,
Away he'd dart on flickering fin,
The softly wavering stalks between.

WB

Then back she climbed into the meadow,
And sitting in the sun-flecked shadow,
Safely beside old Bruin again,
She wreathed a dainty daisy chain;
Please to look and see it there,
Dangling in her fleecy hair.

Soon after in her garden,
While playing with her ball,
Ann heard a distant music
On the other side of the wall —
A far-off singing, shrill and sweet,
In the still and sunshine day,
And these the words were of the song
That voice did sing and say:—

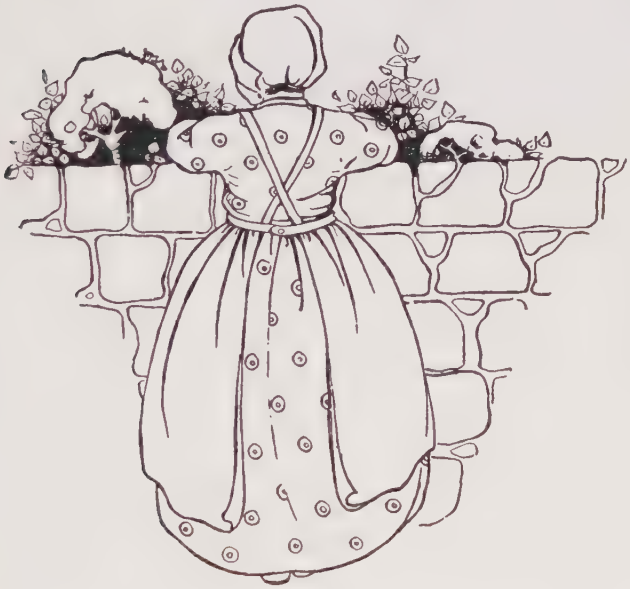
"Happy, happy it is to be
Where the greenwood hangs o'er the dark blue sea;
To roam in the moonbeams clear and still
And dance with the elves
Over dale and hill;
To taste their cups, and with them roam
The fields for dewdrops and honeycomb.
Climb then, and come, as quick as you can,
And dwell with the fairies, Elizabeth Ann!"

Ann held her ball, and listened;
The faint song died away;
And it seemed it was a dream she'd dreamed
In the hot and sunshine day;
She heard the whistling of the birds,
The droning of the bees;
And then once more the singing came,
And now the words were these:—

"Never, never, comes tear or sorrow,
In the mansions old where the fairies dwell;
But only the harping of their sweet harp-strings,
And the lonesome stroke of a distant bell,
Where upon hills of thyme and heather,
The shepherd sits with his wandering sheep;
And the curlew wails, and the skylark hovers
Over the sand where the conies creep;
Climb then, and come, as quick as you can,
And dwell with the fairies, Elizabeth Ann!"

WB

And just as Ann a-tiptoe crept,
Under the old green wall,
To where a stooping cherry tree
Grew shadowy and tall;
Above the fairy's singing
Hollow and shrill and sweet,
That seemed to make her heart stand still,
And then more wildly beat,
Came Susan's voice a-calling "Ann!
Come quick as you are able;
And wash your grubby hands, my dear,
For dinner's on the table!"



There was an old woman who lived in the Fens
Who had for her breakfast two nice fat hens.

There was an old woman
who lived at Licke
Whatever she gobbled up
gobbled up quick.

There was an old woman
who lived at Bow
Who waited until her
guests should go.

There was an old woman who lived at Ware
Supped on red-currant jelly and cold jugged hare.

There was an old woman
who lived at Bury
Who always ate in a vio-
lent hurry.

There was an old woman
who lived at Flint
Fed her sheep on parsley,
her lambs on mint.

There was an old woman who lived at Cork
Lunched with her nevvy on peas and pork.

There was an old woman
who lived at Greenwich
Went out with a candle
to cut herself spinach.

There was an old woman
who lived at Hull
Who never stopped eating
till she was full.

There was an old woman who lived at Diss
Who couldn't abide greens, gristle, or grease.

There was an old woman
who lived at Thame
Who ate up the courses
just as they came.

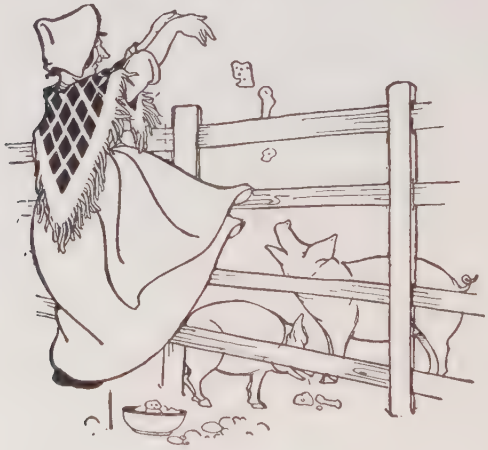
There was an old woman
who lived at Tring
At meals did nothing but
laugh and sing.

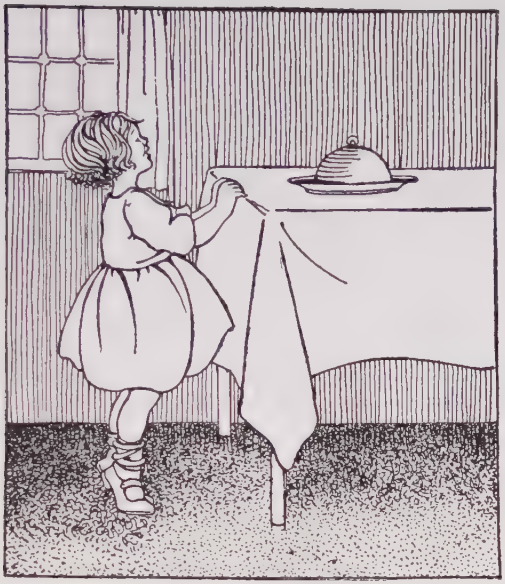
There was an old woman
who lived at Steep
Who still munched on
though fast asleep.

There was an old woman
who lived at Wick
Whose teeth did nothing
but clash and click.

There was an old woman who lived at Lundy
Always had hash for dinner on Monday.

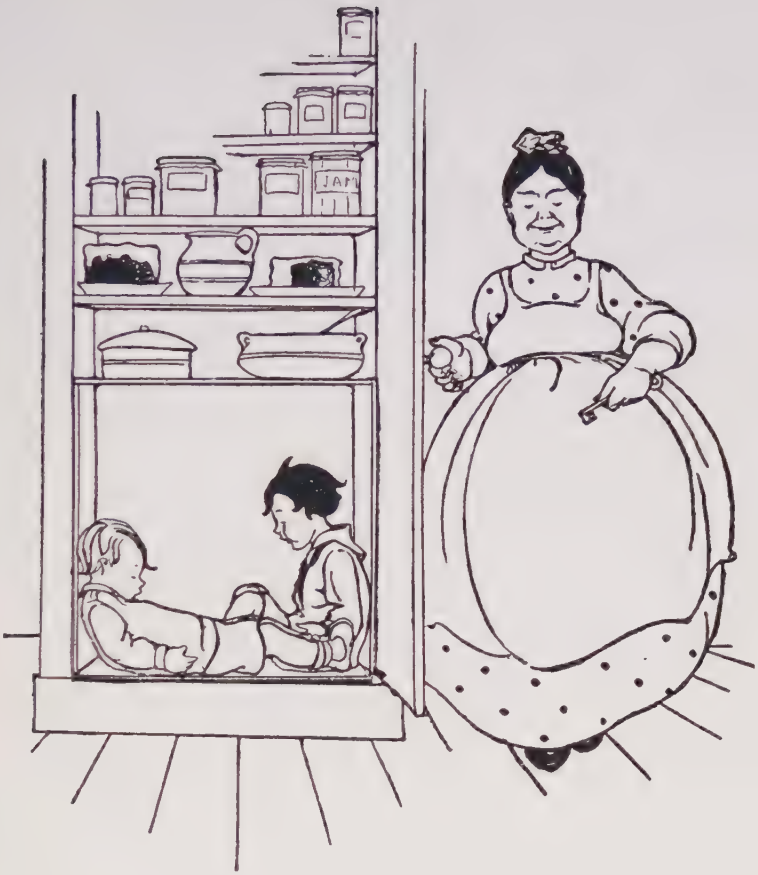
There was an old woman who lived at Dover
Threw to her pigs whatever was over.





But this little morsel of morsels here —
Just what it is is not quite clear:
It might be pudding, it might be meat,
Cold, or hot, or salt, or sweet;
Baked, or roasted, or broiled, or fried;
Bare, or frittered, or puddinged, or pied;
Cooked in a saucepan, jar, or pan —
But it's all the same to Elizabeth Ann.
For when one's hungry it doesn't much matter
So long as there's *something* on one's platter.

Now fie! O fie! How sly a face!
Half greedy joy, and half disgrace;
O foolish Ann, O greedy finger,
To long for that forbidden ginger!



O Ann, the story I could tell! —
What horrid, horrid things befell
Two gluttonous boys who soft did creep,
While Cook was in her chair asleep,

Into a cupboard, there to make
A feast on stolen tipsy-cake —
Which over night they had hid themselves,
On one of her store cupboard shelves;
They ate so much, they ate so fast,
They both were sadly stuffed at last.
Drowsy and stupid, blowsed and blown,
In sluggish sleep they laid them down,
And soon rose up a stifled snore
From where they huddled on the floor.
And, presently, Cook, passing by,
Her cupboard door ajar did spy,
And that all safe her stores might be,
Turned with her thumb the noiseless key.
Night came with blackest fears to wrack
Those greedy knaves (named Dick and Jack).
They woke; and in the stuffy gloom
Waited in vain for Cook to come.
They dared not knock, or kick, or shout,
Not knowing *who* might be about.
The days dragged on. Their parents said,
"Poor Dick and Jack; they must be dead!"
Hungrier and hungrier they grew;
They searched the darksome cupboard through;
Candles, and soda, salt, and string,
Soap, glue — they ate up everything:

Nothing but shadows they seemed to be,
Gnawing a stick of wood for tea.
At length, at last, alas! alack!
Jack looked at Dick; and Dick at Jack;
And in his woe each famished brother
Turned in the dusk and ate the other.

So when Cook came to open the door,
Nothing was there upon the floor;
As with her candle she stood there,
Ceiling to floor the place was bare;
Not even a little heap of bones
That had been two fat brothers once!

And see! That foolish Ann's forgot
To put the cover on the pot;
And also smeared — the heedless ninny —
Her sticky fingers on her pinny.
And, O dear me! without a doubt,
Mamma has found the culprit out.
And Ann is weeping many a tear;
And shame has turned her back, poor dear;
Lonely and angry, in disgrace,
She's hiding her poor mottled face.
But ginger now will tempt in vain;
She'll never, never taste again.

WB

But as when April showers are gone
Shines out again the beauteous sun,
So, too, Ann's sobbing "Sorry" said,
She was as quickly comforted:
And here, upon the stroke of three,
Half-way 'twixt dinner-time and tea,
Cosily tucked in her four-legged chair,
With nice clean hands and smooth brushed hair,
In some small secret nursery nook,
She sits with her big Picture Book.

There Puss in Boots, with sidelong eye
And bushy tail goes mincing by;

Peering into an empty cupboard
With her old Dog stoops Mother Hubbard;

Beside a bushy bright-green Wood
Walks with the Wolf Red Ridinghood;

In their small Cottage the Three Bears,
Each at his bowl of Porridge stares;

There's striking Clock — and scampering Mouse;
The King of Hearts' cool Counting-house;

There a Fine Lady rides all day,
But never, never rides away;
While Jack and Jill for ever roll;
And drinks to his Fiddlers Old King Cole.

And though Ann's little busy head
Can't quite get down from A to Z,
She is content to sit and look
At her bright-colored Picture book.

As soon as ever twilight comes,
  Ann creeps upstairs to pass,
With one tall candle, just an hour
  Before her looking-glass.
She rummages old wardrobes in,
  Turns dusty boxes out;
And nods and curtseys, dances, sings,
  And hops and skips about.
Her candle's lean long yellow beam
  Shines softly in the gloom,
And through the window's gathering night
  Stars peep into the room.

WB

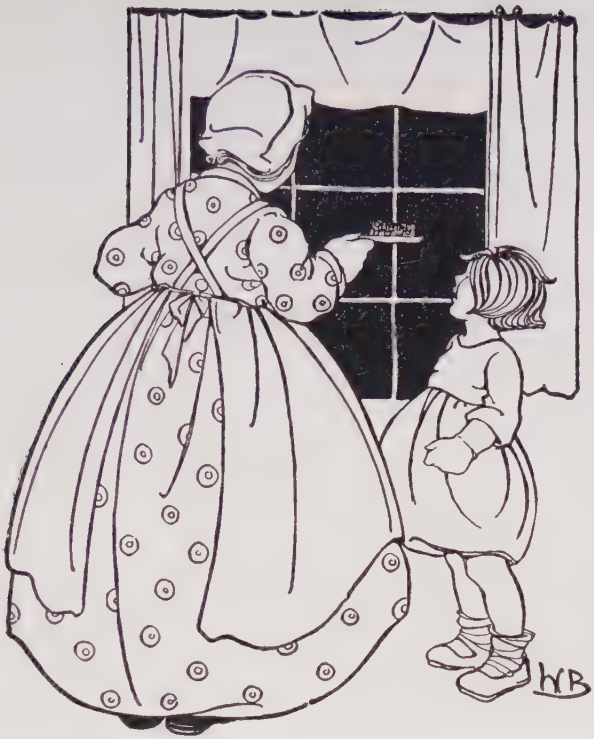
Ages and ages and ages ago,
Ann's great-grandmother dressed just so;
In a big poke-bonnet, a Paisley shawl,
Climbed into her coach to make a call;
And over the cobble-stones jogged away,
To drink with her daughter a dish of tay.

Then nice little boys wore nankeen breeches;
And demure little girls with fine silk stitches
Learned to make samplers of beasts and birds
And ever so many most difficult words.
Then Anns and Matildas and Sams and Dicks
Were snoring in blankets long before six.
And every night with a tallow candle,
And a warming-pan with a four-foot handle,
The maids came up to warm the bed
(And burnt a great hole in the sheet instead).
Then pretty maids blushed, and said, "My nines!"
At hundreds of thousands of Valentines.
Then never came May but danced between
Robin and Marion, Jack-in-the-Green;
Then saged and onioned, and stewed in its juice,
To table on Michaelmas Day sailed Goose;
Gunpowder Treason and Plot to remember,
Bonfires blazed on the fifth of November;
And never the Waits did a-carolling go
In less than at least a yard of snow.

So—poor little Ann a sigh must smother
Because she isn't her great-grandmother.

But now, dear me!
What's this we see?
A dreadful G —
H — O — S — T!

A-glowering with
A chalk-white face
Out of some dim
And dismal place.
Oh, won't poor Nurse
Squeal out, when she
Comes up, that dreadful
Shape to see!
She'll pant and say,
"O la! Miss Ann,
I thought you was
A bogey-man!
Now! look at them
Untidy clo'es!
And, did you ever,
What a nose!
If you was in
A smock, Miss Ann,
They'd take you for
The Miller's man.
To see the mischief
You have done,
And me not twenty minutes
gone!"

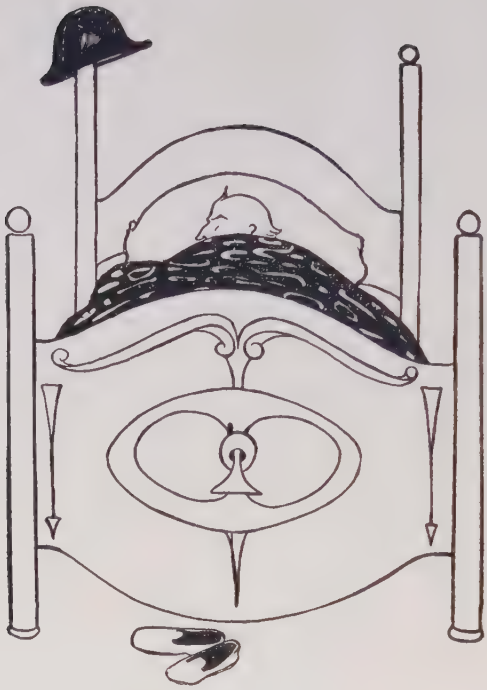


"But now, my dear, for gracious sake,
Eat up this slice of currant cake;
Though, certain sure, you'll soon be screaming
For me to come — and find you dreaming.

In *my* young days in bed we'd be
Once we had swallowed down our tea.
And cake! — we'd dance if mother spread
A scrap of butter on our bread!
Except my brother, little Jack,
Who was, poor mite, a humptyback.
But there! times change; he's grown a man;
And I'm no chick meself, Miss Ann.
Now, don't 'ee move a step from here,
I sha'n't be gone for long, my dear!"

But soon as Nurse's back was turned
Ann's idle thumbs for mischief yearned.
See now, those horrid scissors, oh,
If they should slip an inch or so!
If Ann should jog or jerk — suppose
They snipped off her small powdery nose!
If she should sneeze, or cough, or laugh,
They might divide her quite in half;
They might this best of little daughters
Slice into four quite equal quaughters.
And though she plagues her nurse, poor soul,
She'd much prefer Miss Mischief whole,
Would wring her hands in sad distraction
O'er each belov'd but naughty fraction.

This then had been our last, last rhyme,
Had Nurse not just returned in time.
For when Ann heard her on the stairs
She hid in haste those wicked shears;
And there as meek as "Little Jimmie"
Was seated smiling in her shimmie.

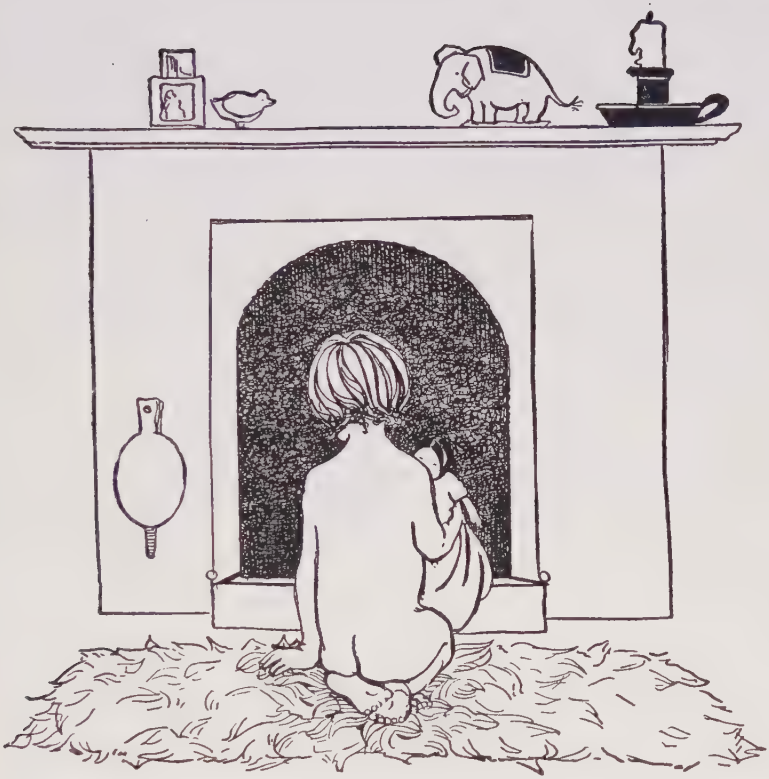


The King in slumber when he lies down
Hangs up in a cupboard his golden crown;
The Lord High Chancellor snores in peace
Out of his Garter and Golden Fleece;
No Plenipotentiary lays him flat
Till he's dangled on bedpost his gold Cockhat;
And never to attic has Page-boy mounted
Before his forty-four buttons are counted;

But higgledy-piggledy
Slovenly Ann
Jumps out of her clothes
As fast as she can;
And with frock, sock, shoe
Flung anywhere,
Slips from dressedupedness
Into her bare.

Now, just as when the day began,
Without one clo', sits little Ann,
A-toasting in this scant attire
Her cheeks before the nursery fire.

Golden palaces there she sees,
With fiery fountains, flaming trees;
Through darkling arch and smouldering glen
March hosts of little shimmering men,
To where beneath the burning skies
A blazing salamander lies,
Breathing out sparks and smoke the while
He watches them with hungry smile.



Now, through the dusk
With muffled bell
The Dustman comes
The world to tell,
Night's elfin lanterns
Burn and gleam
In the twilight, wonderful
World of Dream.

Hollow and dim
Sleep's boat doth ride,
Heavily still
At the waterside.
Patter, patter,
The children come,
Yawning and sleepy,
Out of the gloom.

Like droning bees
In a garden green,
Over the thwarts
They clamber in.
And lovely Sleep
With long-drawn oar
Turns away
From the whispering shore.

Over the water
Like roses glide
Her hundreds of passengers
Packed inside,
To where in her garden
Tremble and gleam
The harps and lamps
Of the World of Dream.

LOB LIE BY THE FIRE

He squats by the fire
On his three-legged stool,
When all in the house
With slumber are full.

And he warms his great hands,
Hanging loose from each knee,
And he whistles as soft
As the night wind at sea.

For his work is now done;
All the water is sweet;
He has turned each brown loaf,
And breathed magic on it.

The milk in the pan,
And the bacon on beam
He has "spelled" with his thumb,
And bewitched has the dream.

Not a mouse, not a moth,
Not a spider but sat,
And quaked as it wondered
What next he'd be at.

But his heart, O, his heart —
It belies his great nose;
And at gleam of his eye
Not a soul would suppose

He had stooped with great thumbs,
And big thatched head,
To tuck his small mistress
More snugly in bed.

Who would think, now, a throat
So lank and so thin
Might make birds seem to warble
In the dream she is in!

Now, hunched by the fire,
While the embers burn low,
He nods until daybreak,
And at daybreak he'll go.

Soon the first cock will 'light
From his perch and point high
His beak at the Ploughboy
Grown pale in the sky;

And crow will he shrill;
Then, meek as a mouse,
Lob will rouse up and shuffle
Straight out of the house.

His supper for breakfast;
For wages his work;
And to warm his great hands
Just an hour in the mirk.

Sadly, O sadly, the sweet bells of Baddeley
Played in their steeples when Robin was gone,
Killed by an arrow,
Shot by Cock Sparrow,
Out of a Maybush, fragrant and wan.

Grievedly, grievedly, tolled distant Shieveley,
When the Dwarfs laid poor Snow-white asleep on
the hill,
Drowsed by an apple,
The Queen, sly and subtle,
Had cut with her knife on the blossomy sill.

O then, mourn Baddeley;
O then, toll Shieveley;
This brief day now over;
Life's but a span.
Tell how my heart aches,
Tell how my heart breaks,
To bid now farewell
To Elizabeth Ann.

Lullay O, lullaby,
Sing this sad roundelay,
Muted the strings;
Since Sorrow began,
The World's said goodbye, Ann,
And so too, must I, Ann;
Child of one brief day,
Elizabeth Ann.

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